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15.2 From incipient to mid-range and beyond

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This section first looks at changes that range from incipient (below 15%) and new and vigorous (15–35%) to mid-range (36–65%), with some nearing completion (66–85%) but not reaching that stage (over 85%) by the end of the 18th century. The changes in these stages include the progressive, the indefinite pronouns ending in *-body* and *-one*, and *its*. The final section focuses on changes in derivational productivity and the difficulty of determining these processes in terms of distinct stages.

15.2.1 Time courses of change

The three changes we are comparing here can be regarded as change in progress, but they are still different in many ways as we will illustrate below. The changes in *-body*, *-one* and *its* can be measured as variables and we can say that by the end of the 18th century *-body* had reached mid-range, *-one* was still in a new and vigorous stage, whereas *its* was already nearing completion. The progressive, on the other hand, cannot be treated in terms of a linguistic variable and its frequencies are measured in normalized frequencies. It is therefore difficult to say which stage of change the form had reached by 1800.

Though the progressive was a low-frequency phenomenon, it became significantly more common over the 18th century as it climbed up from 4.45 (/10,000) at the beginning of the century to 10.88 at the end. It was used predominantly in the present tense. The progressive passive was not observed in the CEECE apart from the isolated case (described by Pratt and Denison 2000 as radical experimentation in Late Modern English), so all grammatical forms were not yet attested and the change was still ongoing. Compared to the 18th century, the progressive increased more vigorously during the 19th century; however, according to Anderwald (2012: 36), the positive evaluations of *be+ing* in the nineteenth century suggest that it was changing at a slow pace. Contemporaries did not perceive it as change in progress, and there thus appears to be an element of quiet stability in its increase.

The compound indefinite pronouns *-body* and *-one* first emerged in Middle English and their development has to be viewed in the complex grammatical context of other competing indefinite pronouns. Previous historical sociolinguistic investigations have shown that two of the compound indefinite pronoun variants were on the increase in correspondence data by the late 17th century (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 2003). On the one hand, *-body* had started to increase in the second half of the 17th century and was new and vigorous (15–35%), replacing the

independent forms as the most frequent variant by the early 18th century. On the other hand, the share of *-one* remained lower than *-body* throughout the decades. There are two possible language internal factors for the early dominance of *-body*. As shown by Raumolin-Brunberg & Kahlas-Tarkka (1997: 74), its introduction to all indefinite pronoun series was much faster than that of *-one*. Additionally, despite the fact that the meanings of both the variants denote singularity, the semantic weight of *-one* seems to have prolonged the grammaticalization process more than that of *-body*. These factors seem to play a role in its early success.

The diachronic trajectories in the results above show a marked cross-over in which the independent forms lose out to *-body* in the late 17th century as the main variant form in correspondence. The indefinites in *-body* undergo a period of vigorous growth and the change reaches a mid-range stage by the first decades of the 18th century. However, their increase is stalled and the share of *-body* starts to decline by the mid-century. In this process, they become stylistically marked as more informal and casual, associated more with spoken genres than written. The forms in *-one* remain minor variants until the early 18th century once the decline of *-man* to a minor variant is completed. As pointed out above, the incipient stages of this decline take place a century earlier in correspondence than in the literate texts investigated in D'Arcy et al. (2013). Their results show that the share of *-body* started to decrease in edited prose in the mid-19th century in a process in which the more ubiquitous *-one* became the prestige form used more frequently in formal and literate genres. All in all, the main forms remain variable in correspondence data at the end of the 18th century as *-body* is the dominant form, and a mid-range variant (36–65%), and *-one* reaches the new and vigorous stage by 1800.

In comparison to *-body* and *-one*, the progression of *its* is much faster. A possible explanation may lie in the relative simplicity of the linguistic variable in the third-person neuter possessive in comparison to indefinite pronouns. With regard to *its* and the main variant form *of it*, previous corpus studies indicate that *its* had been available as the third-person neuter possessive singular determiner at least from the beginning of the 17th century, and already by the 1650s *its* had gained the dominant position (Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg 1994: 176). The use further increased in the 18th century, reaching c. 80% share of the variable towards the end of the century, so that by 1760–1800 the change was nearing completion. The final completed stage was reached somewhat later in the mid-nineteenth century, but just as *-body* and *-one* continue as variant forms in Present-day English, *its* and *of it* variation still exists.

15.2.2 Sociolinguistic patterns

All three variables are relatively similar with regard to their absolute frequencies. The frequencies vary between some 1,400 and 1,700 instances in the CEECE data. These raw frequencies make possible nuanced sociolinguistic analyses, as seen in the preceding chapters, but we soon encounter the problem of vanishing evidence when we increase the number of independent variables. In addition, it is important to point out that language internal grammatical factors also played a role in the development of all of the features with certain grammatical environments favouring a specific variant form. The most salient sociolinguistic variables differed in each case and in different phases of the change.

Rank and register were shown to have the most significant influence in the use of the progressive. Middle class writers, specifically the professionals, were ahead of the other ranks throughout the century, which suggests that this quiet, seemingly inconspicuous change was led from below during the Late Modern period. The final decades of the century show that the usage increased throughout the social strata; at this point the rank difference started to even out. The progressive was also particularly frequent in familiar communication, correspondence between close family members (FN). This seems to confirm the associations of the progressive as a more "spontaneous, unmonitored, colloquial" language feature (Kranich 2010). As for gender, this was not a significant variable. Women's letters do not provide enough data of this low-frequency item until the end of the century, at which point women take the lead.

When we examine the overusers of the progressive, these outliers represent writers of lower and middle class background, both men and women, some of them social risers, who are active during the latter part of the century and who focused their use of this feature in their letters to close family members and close friends. The outliers thus epitomize the general trends that were observed: increased activity in usage during the latter part of the 18th century, in a familiar register, and largely as change from below.

With regard to the forms in *-body* and *-one*, the sociolinguistic stratification in CEEC is such that the change is led by women in the 17th century, but there are no significant correlations with writers' social status. In addition, the earlier results indicate that *-body* was more frequently associated with the South (London, the Royal Court, and East Anglia), whereas *-one* was dominant in the North. However, the size of CEEC makes it difficult to study a low-frequency variable in general, and the larger size of the CEECE offers more insights of social stratification and socio-cultural context for understanding this variable. If we use indirect evidence, the examination of the 18th-century grammars suggests that the changes in the

indefinites seem to have taken place below the level of linguistic awareness as they are not commented upon in grammars, but the corpus results question this observation.

The results show that the change towards *-body* was clearly promoted by women, but there are no gender-related patterns found for *-one* in correspondence data. This observation is confirmed both by the correlational results and the non-parametric bootstrapping evidence. This evidence here does not corroborate some previous observations that the forms in *-body* would have at the early stages been associated with men. In fact, evidence of vernacular associations of *-body* remains scarce in correspondence data. The results illustrate that it is closely associated with the highest social layer, i.e. the nobility, up to the mid-century. Similarly, it is firmly established in London a few decades before the other areas, as was also the case in Nevalainen & Raumolin-Brunberg (2003). When one correlates the variant forms with writers' years of birth, the results show that *-body* in the early decades was a generational change as it peaks in the letters of those individuals who were born after the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries. It starts to decline for the following generations, and *-body* and *-one* enter complementary trajectories.

These results suggest that the spread of *-one*, once it enters the stage of vigorous growth in the mid-century, is a change from above in which the driving force is the highest social layer. The *-body* forms in the first period are clearly associated with London, but this distinction disappears during the course of the century.

The incoming *its* seems to have spread regionally to different parts of the country before the more rapid rise of the form from 1740 onwards, when the dialectal differences level out. Just like the spread of the progressive, the development of *its* seems to be a change from below rather than from above in the sense that lower ranks lead the change. The diffusion is led by men for the most of the eighteenth century, but women quickly increase their use up to 90% towards the end of the century when the variant is firmly established as the third-person neuter possessive. Both generational and communal change operate simultaneously as different generations increased their use from what they must have learned in their infancy but not to the same level. The generations born immediately before and at the beginning of the final rapid rise no longer differed from each other.

In this data set, we have some possibilities of observing the significance of social variation in different stages of change as we have two changes in mid-range: *-body* in 1682–1800 and *its* in 1680–1759. In both cases we found gender and social variation during this phase. In the case of *its* it was not constantly significant, but it is difficult to say whether this is an artefact of varying quantities of data from different social ranks and genders in different subperiods.

15.2.3 Issues of change in productivity

The discussion so far has ignored the change in the productivity of *-ity*. This is because the nature of the change differs from the others in that the stage of the change is more difficult to evaluate. As with the progressive, there is no clear linguistic variable involved; furthermore, it is even more unclear what would constitute a "completed" change in terms of productivity.

What we may be able to observe is the stage at which an affix becomes productive, which in the case of *-ity* is in the Middle English period (Dalton-Puffer 1996: 106–107; Gardner 2013: 108–111; but cf. Dalton-Puffer 1994). At first the suffix occurs in loanwords from French, after which it starts to be perceived as a word-formational element in English, probably first by bi- or trilingual (English–French–Latin) individuals, who would have most often been highly educated men. However, a second important stage in its development takes place in the 16th century, when *-ity* is increasingly used in calques on Latin and from there develops its automatic productivity on bases in *-able* (Marchand 1969: 312–314; see, however, Dalton-Puffer 1996: 107 for earlier formations on *-able*). Again, we may assume the change to have been led by men with a classical education.

In the correspondence genre, we have evidence of a continuous growth in the productivity of *-ity* in the 17th and 18th centuries, possibly led by the middling rank of professionals (Säily & Suomela 2009; Chapter 12 above). In the 17th century, women are lagging behind, but by the 18th century, they have mostly caught up with men, with the exception of letters written to close friends, in which register men exhibit a more creative and playful use of *-ity*. The lowest classes, however, are still lagging behind in the 18th century. While the change may be linked to the overall increase in the productivity of *-ity* observed by Lindsay & Aronoff (2013) in the OED, part of it may also be due to stylistic change in middle- and upper-class letter-writing practices (cf. Biber & Finegan 1997).

Comparing this change with the three discussed above, we can see that similar social categories are at play: social rank, gender and register may all affect productivity. As a stylistic choice, *-ity* in the 18th century is both elevated (as a Latinate, "learned" suffix) and an involvement feature; as such, it is perhaps more akin to the outgoing second-person singular pronoun *thou*, discussed in the next section.